

Benefits of Buying Recycled

Introduction

Purchasing recycled-content products (RCP) has many benefits. Below is a brief listing and explanation of just some of the advantages buying recycled offers.

Saves Money

Many RCPs, such as janitorial paper products, corrugated packaging, padded mailers, latex paint, compost, mulch, writing tablets, remanufactured toner cartridges, and many others, cost less than or the same as their non-recycled counterparts.

Some RCPs, particularly durable plastic and rubber products like plastic lumber and rubberized asphalt, have an initial cost that may be higher than comparable non-RCPs. However, when looking at the cost of the products over their entire lives, these RCPs often turn out to be less expensive. When cost comparisons include repair, maintenance, labor, replacement, and other costs, the total cost of durable RCPs will probably become less than similar non-RCPs.

Job Creation

Studies indicate that every 15,000 tons of solid waste recycled into a new product creates nine jobs, and every 15,000 tons of yard trimmings composted rather than discarded creates seven jobs. When compared to two jobs created for every 15,000 tons of solid waste incinerated and one job for the same amount of yard trimmings landfilled, the economic benefits of recycling become clear.

Conserve Natural Resources

Recycling products rather than discarding them after they have exceeded their useful lives reduces our reliance on natural resources. The products we place in the recycling bins become the raw secondary materials from which new products are manufactured. By purchasing RCPs, we increase manufacturers' demand for secondary materials, which leads to more recycling. Purchasing RCPs also decreases the need for virgin natural resources, which means cutting down fewer trees, mining fewer minerals, and pumping less oil from the ground.

Conserve Energy

Manufacturing RCPs from secondary materials is almost always less energy-intensive than manufacturing non-RCPs from virgin resources. The energy needed to collect, clean, and process secondary materials is often less than extracting virgin resources. Also, the energy needed during the manufacturing of an RCP is normally less than what's needed to manufacture non-RCP products. Purchasing RCPs will decrease the need for energy, which subsequently reduces the need for coal, oil, and other non-renewable energy resources.

Reduce Waste and Pollution

Manufacturing products from secondary materials rather than virgin materials is not pollution free, but it is typically a much cleaner process. Because fewer steps are usually required to make RCPs than to make non-RCPs, this creates less waste.

RCP manufacturing facilities try to locate in major metropolitan areas where the secondary materials are generated and collected. This usually requires less transportation, which in turn causes less pollution. RCP manufacturers are usually more concerned about unnecessary or excessive packaging, which is another significant source of waste. Purchasing RCPs helps to reduce the amount of waste created during manufacturing and transportation, and it reduces the amount of air and water pollution generated by manufacturing.

Conserve Landfill Space

More than 35 million people live in California. More people result in more solid waste. More solid waste, combined with less landfill capacity, increases the need to find alternatives to landfilling or incinerating solid waste. Diverting materials to be recycled—rather than landfilled—preserves the landfill capacity currently permitted in California.

Attain RCP Procurement Goals

Each State agency and many local governments are required by law to buy RCPs in sufficient quantities to attain their specified procurement goals. Purchasing RCPs exhibits your support of these State laws and documents your efforts to attain compliance with them.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut your energy costs, Flex Your Power and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.